At first sight, this painting gives the impression of being the whole of another painter: lighter in tone, and more refined in composition and drawing, although the definition of space between the hind legs of the dragon and the foot of the tree is very uncertain. However, comparison of the available details leads to the conclusion that the paintings in the manuscript were all worked out by a single painter, or at least by one master with a pupil or pupils. One of them probably succeeded in producing this painting of his own or the young Rustam and a multi-coloured rock (Ann Arbor University Library manuscript, f. 16v). The landscape on the horizon is very similar to that of Nos. 1 and 12, and in its palette and details of vegetation and architecture it is very close to No. 13. The trees are depicted in the same manner as in Nos. 9 and 11.

As in No. 13 (see below), even the rather conventional landscape differs from the others. The architectural elements on the horizon show an obvious resemblance to the European-influenced Indian art of the last part of the 16th c. This can be seen especially in the fragment of wash-drawing in the upper right corner, with its tall towers, birds and trees. The various kinds of birds are also slightly different here. In the tree in the foreground, a bird resembling a small white heron is hiding. Both Gishtasp and the chinoiserie dragon are represented "realistically" with a lot of detail: Gishtasp has his left hand tightly bound with the white cloth to protect it from the Dragon's fiery breath. He is putting in a dagger hidden in his right hand into the Dragon's throat, which is belching black smoke.

11. "Rustam, while roasting an onager, kicks aside the rock pushed by Bahman" (fig. 15)

Once more, this is a rather curious and idiosyncratic depiction of the scene. According to Firdawsi's story, Rustam is supposed to be cooking his dinner. He shot an onager in the mountains and being hungry, strong-bodied, he is roasting the whole animal for his evening meal. Bahman, in an attempt to kill him and trying to kill him in revenge for the death of his brother, pushes a rock down from the top of the hill where he was hiding, right on to Rustam's head. The episode is designed to show Rustam's excellent reactions as a warrior: though unaware of the danger, with his hands busy with cooking, he was nevertheless able to protect himself from Bahman's fatal rock. Usually painters have tried to follow the text more or less precisely, as in a painting from Fitzwilliam museum in Cambridge (fig. 16) [65]. Here, the realistic details (Rakhsh, disturbed by the unexpected noise, turns his head back with some grass still in his mouth; Bahman is hiding in the mountains; both Rustam's hands are occupied) are combined with the frankly fantastic. A huge pink rock of incredible size has been pushed down from a completely blue mountain; red and blue, black and yellow stones decorate the banks of the spring, and the small onager is barely the size of some rabbit! But the idea of the story is illustrated properly: Rustam, being alone, without any attendant, has managed to save his life in this almost hopeless situation.

The same scene in a manuscript in the British Library [66] adds more figures, even a servant of Rustam, who is talking to his master without any attempt to help him. Bahman's rock is much smaller, the onager bigger, but both Rustam's hands are still occupied. In the painting from Ann Arbor, however, Rustam is completely freed from the job given to him by Firdawsi. He is sitting on a rock, his hands empty, conversing with his attendant, who is looking after his stallion. Two (sic) other servants are barbecuing, what is obviously a bird almost too small to see. There is no trace of an onager.

One interesting detail of the picture is that Bahman (later defaced), sitting on a rock at the top of the hill without any attempt to hide himself, has already pushed one rather small stone on Rustam. The latter has it resting on his left foot. Nevertheless, Bahman has another rock in his right hand, ready to throw that too. Here two interpretations are possible: either the painter forgot about the first rock he had already depicted and added another one, which is mostly unlikely. Alternatively, it could be the painter's attempt to show the scene in its progress, as in ancient wall paintings or bas-reliefs, where the heroes are depicted as it were in cinematographic action. We have already raised this possibility earlier in connection with painting No. 8.

A reflection of this tradition can easily be seen in late Kashgari painting. The manuscript of the Mahbub al-Qilab "The hearts' beloved" by Barkhuwār b. Mahmūd Turkmān Fārdī al-Mumāzik in the National Library of Russia [67] contains several very clear examples of it. The miniature on f. 28v illustrates two stories where the main characters are depicted several times in different situations according to the narrative. In the upper part of the painting there is a story about a man and an ant. One can see this man first while he is sitting in the field, which belongs to
him, destroying the path of the ant. In the next scene this man learns about a fire which has burnt his field. This is his punishment for the sufferings he has brought upon the ant. Lower down there is a tree where a man is hiding; this is the wealthy guest of a family. The wife offers her husband to kill their guest. At the bottom the woman sees their dead son, whom she has killed by mistake for their guest. The last scene in the left lower corner represents the dead woman, who has committed suicide after she recognized that the man she killed was her son.

Possibly, therefore, in the miniature from the Ann Arbor Shāhnāma the artist has depicted the same stone twice: first in Dahan’s hand before throwing it at Rustam, and then as Rustam kicks it away. This would be rather an innovative way of depicting the episode, but otherwise the painting is entirely lacking in drama, and without the text it would not be clear at all that Rustam has been in any danger.

However, generally the depiction of the scene is very close to the text, which the painting represents. The break-line before reads:

Yak-t-i sang az un kāh-i bhidā hokand
Parī khyt az un kāh-i nāra badand.
He [Dahan] picked up a stone from the granite rock,
Threw it down from the high mountain [68].

12. “Rustam shoots Islāndīyar in the eye” (Fig. 17)

This is one of the most frequently illustrated scenes [69]. The figures of Rustam and Islāndīyar are placed in the third plane but they are bigger than the others. Rustam’s costume differs from its five other representations in the manuscript. His tiger skin jacket has long sleeves and some side decorations (as has Islāndīyar’s tunic and some others in the painting), which otherwise can be seen only in No. 13. Rustam has long black hair, a moustache and a beard of almost the same style as in the other miniatures. Rakbāb is unusually grey.

The landscape is limited by the green hill, which at the bottom turns purplish-red. The painting is symmetrical, with the figure of the horserman in red at the centre. Each side has a tree in the upper corner, a group of horsemen and foot soldiers, and two flocks of birds, one above each of the two main figures.

Once more, there are various peculiarities in the way the artist has chosen to depict the scene. First, the manner of Rustam’s killing Islāndīyar — with a two-pointed tamarisk arrow as the Sinsugh taught him. It was only way Islāndīyar could be killed, and it was only the Sinsugh who could know that. Islāndīyar reproaches Rustam for winning by a trick, not by honest valour:

Ba mardī matāī pīr-e Dastṭān nā akhὐţ
Nīāh hān ba-dīrā gīz ki dārmān ba maḥṣūţ.
It wasn’t the courage of Dastṭān’s son, which has killed me with his courage
But this tamarisk [arrow] I have in my fist [70].

13. “Rustam shoots his brother Shaghdād from the pit” (Plate 2)

As in the previous painting, a very popular scene from one of the main episodes in the Shāhnāma is given a most unusual rendition, with little concern for the text [71]. The illustration here is somewhat behind the text. The break-lines before and after suggest already the scene of murder of Shaghdād to be depicted, while Rustam is only aiming his bow at the target.

Darehāti-i bāntā dar bān darakhē
Ba bāntāv-i rafrān dā-āgāh bar foršākh
Shaghdād az hās-i jāmāt-i bā (bā kard) [Tahmīn] bar-dā dard kāthā kārd.
He pierced his brother together with the tree
Passing away he gave up with his life
Shaghdād from his wound gave a sigh
The Stout [Rustam] made his pain short [72].

14. “Ardāḡātīr views Haftwād’s house” (Plate 3)

The scene is represented in four planes like in a doll’s house, and still no attempt to conform with the rules of perspective.

Rustam’s costume is unusual: his jacket has short sleeves and the same feather-like fringes on each side, and his trousers are made of tiger skin too. Rakbāb is pink, well depicted in movement. His peacock decoration is neat and modest. Shaghdād is standing implausibly calmly direct in front of Rustam, without any attempt to hide himself behind the tree, as is indicated by Firdawsi’s text. Quite the opposite: though Shaghdād must see the arrow aimed at him his stance suggests that he is ready to die and is waiting calmly for his last moment.

The pit is represented as a perfect circle, with a black background and without any sharp stakes or spears at the bottom. It resembles a giant ball rolling down the hill. The architecture of the pavilion is very similar to that of No. 16, and the palette and execution also recall the same hand.
go disguised as a merchant to the fortress where the Worm is worshipped by the pagans. He receives gold from Ardashīr to equip his caravan with all necessary goods. However what the text describes is Shahrūq’s conversation inside the fortress with the Worm worshippers, who become completely drunk after he gave them wine:

Bar ənām hana kām-i 3 t-e saljuḵ
Bīgālband 1-k-e tārāstā kā kān
Bar-awrdard kāla-horda bar gūna ṭang
Pārastandā biwajayt hā mā bā ching-
Bīkārband 212-ye masulā shangād
Pārastandāsēng hā pārastān shangād.

His wish became true from these words,
They said: Do worship it you!
He brought a donkey load of different goods
The worshippers sat down with wine in their hands.
They drank a little and became drunk.
The [worm] worshippers became wine worshippers [73].

The break line after the picture shows already the killing of the Worm:

In conclusion, we can say first that the Shāhānšāh from the University of Ann Arbor Graduate Library is one of the most interesting items of the collection, representing provincial Mughal art of the 17th c. It is hard to say where exactly it was produced. The text of the manuscript was probably executed by a commercial calligrapher, possibly in Iran; he seems to have been a good professional, and his handwriting a competent Persian trained nasta’ī. However his numerous mistakes, and corruptions of the Firdawī’s text, bear witness to his commercial attitude to his work. The paintings were probably added later, when the unfinished manuscript was brought to one of the Indian provincial courts, and its empty spaces were supplied with illustrations.

The painter evidently started his work from the beginning of the manuscript, adapting the spaces left by the calligrapher for the painter who was originally supposed to illustrate it. In his first paintings he preferred a strictly rectangular shape in his works, even when the space for the illustration was in a stepped format (No. 3, f. 45r, “The wedding of Zal and Rūḏbār”; No. 4, f. 80v, “The battle of Rustam and Afrāšīyāb”; and maybe No. 5, f. 90v, “The wedding of Rustam and Tahmīnāt”). Only by his sixth painting did the artist turn to giving a stepped shape for his miniatures, in a way new to him, which he more or less successfully executed in the next three paintings. In the last of these three, he felt ready to return to his usual manner: the painting “Rustam kills Askhabāb” has distinct traces of paint from the sky in the stepped area at the left upper corner. The painter then executed three miniatures in a row in his more conservative, rectangular style.

The illustrations betray the touch or influence of at least two hands, with one of them, however, dominant. We may suppose that it was a master with one of his pupils, whose paintings were finished by the master afterwards, or the other way round. We have already drawn attention to the main characteristics of the paintings, the uniform treatment of the sky, flocks of birds, and trees; the prominence of low hills dominating the composition and a high horizon line, leaving a bare green ground for the depiction of the action. Even in the stronger paintings, such as No. 4, “The battle of Rustam and Afrāšīyāb” (fol. 80), with a distinct representation of Rustam, together with the particularly vivid and unusual colours in the rocky outcrop at the centre of the composition, the scene is still depicted with great naïveté. The whole sequence of paintings, indeed, shows little sophistication.

The naïveté of the paintings is underlined by their general failure, in most cases, to illustrate closely the scenes intended. We have seen that very few of them exactly fit the words of Firdawī’s poem, and furthermore they are often introduced at moments where the surrounding text might have suggested a different subject, as, for example, in the last miniature.

I have attempted to show the value of the lines surrounding the text as a tool for analysing the context of the paintings; in one case (No. 3), it is a missing line that gives the best clue to the otherwise ambiguous nature of the scene depicted. This shows the need for a more precise and rigorous way of identifying the subjects/titles of these paintings, and the difficulty of doing so when the image does not conform to the text.

Notes

2. The preliminary list of the manuscripts of the Muslin Division of the department of Rare Books and Special Collections of the Graduate Library of the University of Michigan was compiled by R. Dougheerty in 1993. I would like to give my gratitude to Dr. Jonathan H. Rodgers, who is the Head of the Near East Division of the Graduate Library and Manuscript Peggy Daub, the Chair of the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections of the Graduate Library, University of Michigan for giving me access to the manuscripts and the
information about the University collection. I thank the University authorities for their kind permission to publish photos of the miniatures from the manuscript.

3. The date is taken from the library information sheet. To my mind the colophon of the manuscript gives another date: 1046.


5. Thanks to Michael Rogers, Sheila Carby and Muhammad Isma’ili Waley for confirming this.


7. I am very grateful to Professor G. Winstedt from the University of Michigan who offered several other possibilities of deciphering this “chronogram”, which unfortunately do not support the probable period of the creation of the manuscript either. The name of the scribe might also give a clue, if he can be identified.

8. Both Olga Akhmatskikh and Philippa Vaughan, who kindly inspected some of the pictures and the fragments of the calligraphy, are closer in their conclusions on this date.

9. Such a possibility is made more likely by the existence of numerous manuscripts of the Shihânama and other works, in which the miniatures were never executed by the painters as intended once the calligraphy was completed. Manuscripts in Cambridge (Main Library, Add. 835), Oxford (Bodleian Library, Peres 4), Diezgate (Institute of the Witten Heritage, 1032), St. Petersburg (Hermitage, VP 929), for example, contain many spaces for paintings that were never executed. The reasons for this are various, but mostly it was the cutting of the financial support of the manuscript production due to the death or displacement of the patron, or painter, or the migration of the latter, etc. Unfinished manuscripts could be presented or sold, taken to another town or country, where they might be completed and furnished with paintings much later.


15. Ibid., No. 570.

16. Ibid., No. 571.

17. Ibid., p. 84, No. 596.

18. The darkness of the brown paint has probably been intensified by oxidation.

19. I detect the presence of several hands in the miniatures of the manuscript. Nevertheless they seem to be produced by one master with some features of his pupil(s), or some of the paintings could have been executed by his pupils with the final touch of one master.

20. DS, i, p. 84, No. 590.

21. In the text it is said “in Hindustân”, where, evidently, in the times of Firdawsi Kâbul was:

Bo Hindu-l-nâf ondâ, san Êrân
Hama hâl-i mihrib-i Kâbul bûstâ.
Make a fire in Hindustân
Bum the palace of Mihhir and the whole of Kâbul

(ibid, p. 106, No. 1157).

22. Ibid., Nos. 1160—1.

23. It is very probable that Firdawsi knew pahtâwi and Avestan texts, where the ancient prototype of the Aburâzid Zaljâk/Djalalûq is mentioned as the Dragon Aztâ Djalalûq, which in New Persian became aghâlîâlûq; the shoulder snakes tend to recall Zaljâk’s reptile origin, cf.:

Bo Hindu-l-nâf ondâ, san Êrân
Hama hâl-i mihrib-i Kâbul bûstâ.
Nafing-i hâl-i mihrib-i Kâbul bûstâ.
Ki hâl-i mihrib-i Kâbul bûstâ.
Make a fire in Hindustân
Bum the palace of Mihhir and the whole of Kâbul.
You should not let him escape from you
As hâl-i mihrib-i Kâbul according to its origin

(ibid, Nos. 1157—8).

It is interesting to remember in this context that according to this genealogy the Iranian (Shi‘it) national hero Rustam who was the son of Zal and Râdida, the daughter of the evil-born Mihrib can be also considered to be a descendant of Zaljâk.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., No. 1166.

26. Ibid., Nos. 1167—8.

27. One of the most famous representations of such visual royalty is the painting from the British Museum, Polier Album “Zulâmâr” and the lion with his vassal and brother-in-law Ahmad Husain Saleh Afdal Lain, Khamal al-Dawla, ca. 1640 (1920—17346; 264 + 184), published by J. M. Rogers in Moghal Miniatures (London, 1993), p. 313, pl. 79.

28. DS, i, p. 196, No. 1752.

29. Cf. “The painting from the British museum’s Palace in a garden’ identified as a probable illustration to a lost episode of the Bahar-nama, ca. 1590 (1774;6—1703 (26); 153 + 957”, Moghal Miniatures, p. 34, pl. 28.
CONSERVATION PROBLEMS

One of the most important parts of Chinese Buddhist art collection stored in the State Hermitage is a collection of icons from Khara-Khoto, a dead city belonging to a Tangut state Xi Xia which existed over 250 years (10th—13th c.). They were discovered in 1908—9 during excavations in a “famous” subregion by Peter K. Kozlov on the instruction of the Emperor Russian Geographic Society [1].

A complex of painting fragments on the canvas is a part of this unique Khara-Khoto icon collection. They represent pieces of different sizes, which were cut out from decontextualized Buddhist icons (fig. 1).

As it is well known, paintings found during excavations had spent a lot of time underground. Many painting fragments were badly damaged by mould, their colour layer, ground and even canvas were ruined. On some pieces the ground was washed out from the support, and the canvas became visible in these places. Colour layer was covered with soil and clay. As a result of negative environmental factors colour layer was badly damaged: it was separated from the support in some places, partly cracked, spilled and powdered (fig. 2).

In the 1940s for the purpose of painting preservation fragments were placed between glasses whose edges were bordered with textile strips. Therefore, at that time preventive conservation of these objects of art was fulfilled (fig. 3).

Taking into account that these damaged painting fragments belong to unique collection, it was necessary to carry out their conservation and create a new form of storage. Before starting conservation work we did the scientific investigations of painting technique. The aim of this work is to show the results of scientific research of the painting materials and share experience of restoring separate fragments of Chinese painting on the canvas.

We carried out an examination of pigments and binding medium of a colour layer and a ground as well as dyes used for colouring of painting support. The investigation of painting technique was fulfilled using methods of polarizing microscopy, gas chromatography, microchemical analysis, UV-spectroscopy. The study of painting technique was begun with preparation of cross-sections, which allowed evaluating the structure of painting and the size of each colour layer (fig. 4). It was observed that the following pigments were used: red — cinnabar, yellow — yellow ochre, blue — azurite, green — malachite, black — charcoal and soot. Ground consisted of chalk with a lot of binding medium. The supports were dyed by means of yellow dyes. As UV-spectra showed all these dyes belonged to the class of flavanoids.

Gas chromatography analysis showed that main component of binding medium was animal glue, but binding medium composition also included little quantity of polyacrylde glue (up to 0.1%) and about 0.9% of oil components.

At the beginning a plan of conservation work was elaborated including the most essential processes: partial removing of the surface soil, the consolidation of colour layer and the support: making of fold margins and mending fragments to the mat.

Perhaps, the most serious problem of Khara-Khoto painting fragments is bad condition of the colour layer and the support, both of them were in need of consolidation.

Before we could start consolidation of the colour layer and the support we had to clean the colour layer surface from contaminants. Mainly, they were soil residues. Grains of soil and sand were removed with a scalpel, the rest grains were treated with a brush No. 0 made from a kolinsky and a squirrel. Carrying out this operation, it was necessary to take into account bad condition of the painting and avoid damaging of the colour layer during this procedure.

The next stage of the work concerned with the consolidation of the colour layer. Basing on the study of binding medium of the colour layer and ground we decided to use gelatine as the closest matter to glues of original binding medium of painting.

Colour layer consolidation was carried out using two techniques. The first way: applying of 1.0—2.0% gelatine solution with a brush under separate painting parts flaking from the support; the second way: applying of 0.5% gelatine solution with a sprayer using a graphic section table. As a rule, we had to combine both methods as the colour layer surface on the majority of fragments was covered with shelling everywhere and on some places it was powdered [2].

When local consolidation of the colour layer was required, we carried out slight pre-moistening with a sprayer
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  Part 3

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